

# Globalism

## *Johnson's Moral Crusade*

*by Hans J. Morgenthau*

American foreign policy has tended in this century to move back and forth between the extremes of an indiscriminate isolationism and an equally indiscriminate internationalism or globalism. While these two positions are obviously identified with utterly different foreign policies – indiscriminate involvement here, indiscriminate abstention there – it is important to note that they share the same assumptions about the nature of the political world and the same negative attitudes toward foreign policy correctly understood. They are equally hostile to that middle ground of subtle distinctions, complex choices, and precarious manipulations, which is the proper sphere of foreign policy.

Both deny the existence of priorities in foreign policy which are derived from a hierarchy of interests and the availability of power to support them. For both extremes, it is either all or nothing, either total involvement or total abstention. Both refuse to concern themselves with the concrete issues of foreign policy on their own merits, that is, in terms of the interests involved and the power available. While isolationism stops short of these concrete issues, globalism soars beyond them. Both assume the self-sufficiency of American power to protect and promote the American national interest either in indiscriminate abstention or indiscriminate globalism. While the isolationist used to say, "We don't need to have anything to do with the world; for we can take care of our interests on our own terms," the globalist says, "We shall take on the whole world, but only on our own terms." Thus isolationism is a kind of introverted globalism, and globalism is a kind of isolationism turned inside out. To stigmatize a position that falls short of such indiscriminate globalism as "neo-isolationism" is a polemic misuse of terms; it derives from the globalist assumption that indiscriminate involvement is, as it were, the natural stance of

American foreign policy.

Both attitudes, in different ways oblivious of political reality, substitute for the complex and discriminating mode of political thought a simple approach, which in its simplicity is commensurate with the simplicity of their picture of the political world: the moral crusade. The isolationist's moralism is naturally negative, abstentionist, and domestically oriented; it seeks to protect the virtue of the United States from contamination by the power politics of evil nations. Wilsonian globalism endeavored to bring the virtue of American democracy to the rest of the world. Contemporary globalism tries to protect the virtue of the "free world" from contamination by Communism and to create a world order in which that virtue has a chance to flourish. The anti-Communist crusade has become both the moral principle of contemporary globalism and the rationale of our global foreign policy.

The anti-Communist crusade has its origins in the Truman Doctrine formulated in President Truman's message to Congress of March 12, 1947. That message assumed that the issue between the United States and the Soviet Union, from which arose the need for aid to Greece and Turkey, must be understood not as the rivalry between two great powers but as a struggle between good and evil, democracy and totalitarianism. In its positive application this principle proclaimed the defense of free, democratic nations everywhere in the world against "direct or indirect aggression," against "subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressure." In its negative application it postulated the containment of the Soviet Union everywhere in the world. Thus the Truman Doctrine transformed a concrete interest of the United States in a geographically defined part of the world into a moral principle of worldwide validity, to be applied regardless of the limits of American interests and of American power.

The globalism of the Truman Doctrine was not put to the test of actual performance. Dean Acheson, President Truman's Secretary of State, in his speech before the National Press Club of January 12, 1950, cut the doctrine down to the size of American national interest and to the power available to support it. "I hear almost

---

PROFESSOR MORGENTHAU, since 1950 Director of the Center for the Study of American Foreign Policy at the University of Chicago, is the author of *Politics Among Nations* and *The Purpose of American Politics*. His most recent article in this journal ("Russia, the US and Vietnam") appeared last May 1.

every day someone say," remarked Mr. Acheson, "that the real interest of the United States is to stop the threat of Communism. Nothing seems to me to put the cart before the horse more completely than that. . . . Communism is the most subtle instrument of Soviet foreign policy that has ever been devised, and it is really the spearhead of Russian imperialism. . . . It is an important point because people will do more damage and create more misrepresentation in the Far East by saying our interest is merely to stop the spread of Communism than any other way. Our real interest is in those people as people. It is because Communism is hostile to that interest that we want to stop it." It was the contrast between the sweeping generalities of the Truman Doctrine and the discriminating policies actually pursued by the Truman Administration which was to haunt Messrs. Truman and Acheson in the years to come. Their foreign policies, especially in Asia, were judged by the standards of the Truman Doctrine and were found wanting.

The contrast between crusading pronouncements and the actual policies pursued continued, and was even accentuated, under the stewardship of John Foster Dulles, owing, on the one hand, to Mr. Dulles' propensity for grandiose announcements and, on the other, to his innate caution and President Eisenhower's common sense. The only major practical tribute which the Eisenhower Administration paid to the anti-Communist crusade was alliances, such as the Baghdad Pact and SEATO, which were supposed to contain Communism in the Middle East and Asia, respectively.

#### *Putting Theory into Practice*

Under President Kennedy, the gap between crusading pronouncements and actual policies started to narrow, due to the intellectual recognition on the part of the Kennedy Administration that Communism could no longer be defined simply, as it could in 1950, as "the spearhead of Russian imperialism." Thus the crusading spirit gave way to a sober differentiating assessment of the bearing the newly emerged, different types of Communism save upon the US national interest.

Under President Johnson pronouncements and policies are now, for the first time since the great transformation of American policy in 1947, very nearly in harmony. What the President has only implied, the Secretaries of State and Defense have clearly stated: We are fighting in Vietnam in order to stop Communism throughout the world. And the President has stated with similar clarity that, "we do not propose to sit here in our rocking chair with our hands folded and let the Communists set up any government in the Western Hemisphere." What in the past we said we were doing or would do but never did, we are now in

the process of putting into practice: to stop the expansion of Communism on a global scale by force of arms.

This is a momentous change. It raises three fundamental issues of intellectual and practical importance: First, what is the purpose of foreign policy when it must deal not, or not only, with a hostile power, but with a hostile political movement transcending national boundaries? Second, what is the bearing of the World-Communist movement upon the national interests of the United States? Third, how can the United States deal with the revolutions which might be taken over by Communism?

These questions, more vexing than those with which foreign policy must ordinarily come to terms, are typical for a revolutionary age. Twice before in modern history, these questions had to be answered. They first arose during the last decade of the eighteenth century in England on the occasion of the expansionist policies of revolutionary France. Three great political minds—Edmund Burke, Charles James Fox, and William Pitt—debated how to deal with the expansionism of a great power which was also the fountainhead of a universal political religion. Fox held that England was not at all threatened by France or, for that matter, by the principles of the French Revolution, which were a mere domestic concern of France, and that therefore England had no reason to be at war with France. Burke, on the other hand, looked at the issue as "the cause of humanity itself. . . . It is not the cause of nation against nation; but as you will observe, the cause of mankind against those who have projected the subversion of the order of things, under which our part of the world has so long flourished. . . . If I conceive rightly of the spirit of the present combination, it is not at war with France, but with Jacobinism. . . . We are at war with a *principle*, and with an example, of which there is no shutting out by fortresses or excluding by territorial limits. No lines of demarcation can bound the Jacobin empire. It must be extirpated in the place of its origin, or it will not be confined to that place." It was for Pitt, the Prime Minister, to apply the standard of the national interest: "The honorable gentleman defies me to state, in one sentence, what is the object of the war. In one word, I tell him that it is security—security against a danger, the greatest that ever threatened the world—security against a danger which never existed in any past period of society. . . . We saw that it was to be resisted no less by arms abroad, than by precaution at home; that we were to look for protection no less to the courage of our forces than to the wisdom of our councils; no less to military effort than to legislative enactment."

The other issue arose after the Napoleonic Wars when the absolute monarchies of Europe were threatened on the one hand by liberal revolutions and, on the other, by the imperial ambitions of Russia claiming

to fight liberalism anywhere in the name of the Christian principles of government. Faced with this dual danger, Lord Castlereagh, the British Foreign Secretary, opposed the expansion of Russia and refused to oppose or support liberal revolutions *per se*. "It is proposed now," he said to the Russian ambassador in 1820, "to overcome the *revolution*; but so long as this revolution does not appear in more distinct shape, so long as this general principle is only translated into events like those of Spain, Naples and Portugal — which, strictly speaking, are only reforms, or at the most domestic upsets, and do not attack materially any other State — England is not ready to combat it." At the same time he wrote to his brother: "It is not possible for the British Government to take the field in fruitlessly denouncing by a sweeping joint declaration the revolutionary dangers of the present day, to the existence of which they are, nevertheless, sufficiently alive. Nor can they venture to embody themselves *en corps* with the nonrepresentative Governments in what would seem to constitute a scheme of systematic interference in the internal affairs of other States; besides, they do not regard mere declarations as of any real or solid value independent of some practical measure actually resolved upon; and what that measure is which can be generally and universally adopted against bad principles overturning feeble and ill-administered governments, they have never yet been able to divine. . . ."

Castlereagh's foreign policy was so unpopular that he was driven to suicide; the people celebrated in the streets of London the news of his death. While Castlereagh did not enjoy what we now call "consensus," he enjoys the historic reputation of a very great and successful statesman. The Austrian chancellor Metternich, on the other hand, a champion of the *status quo* against liberalism, saw his political world disappear in the revolutions of 1848.

A foreign policy which takes for its standard the active hostility to a world-wide political movement, such as Jacobinism, liberalism, or Communism, confuses the sphere of philosophic or moral judgment with the realm of political action and for this reason it is bound to fail. For there are narrow limits, defined by the interest at stake and the power available, within which a foreign policy has a chance to be successful, and a foreign policy which would oppose Communist revolution and subversion throughout the world oversteps those limits. It does so in three different respects.

First, the resources of even the most powerful nation are limited. They may suffice for intervening in two or three small countries simultaneously. But if one considers Hanson Baldwin's suggestion that the United States might have to send a million men to Vietnam, one realizes the extent to which available resources fall short of the unlimited commitment.

Second, the task such a foreign policy sets itself is

unending. You suppress Communism in South Vietnam and it raises its head, say, in Thailand; you suppress it in the Dominican Republic and it raises its head, say, in Colombia. The successful suppression of revolution in one spot does not discourage revolution elsewhere, provided the objective conditions are favorable. The conjunction between an objective revolutionary situation in large parts of the world with a worldwide political ideology and organization committed to exploit it, makes piecemeal attacks upon individual, acute trouble spots a hopeless undertaking.

Third, the attack upon a particular revolution as part of a world-wide, anti-revolutionary campaign is bound to have world-wide repercussions. Local successes against a particular revolution may have to be paid for by loss of support elsewhere and even by the strengthening of revolutionary forces throughout the world.

The only standard by which a sound foreign policy must be informed is not moral and philosophic opposition to Communism as such, but the bearing which a particular Communism in a particular country has upon the interests of the United States. That standard was easily applied in 1950 when Communism anywhere in the world could be considered a mere extension of Soviet power and be opposed as such. The task is infinitely more difficult today when Soviet control of the



"From the Shores of Hispaniola,  
to the Hills of Viet Nam . . ."

World-Communist movement has been successfully challenged by the competition of China and the reassertion of their particular national interests by Communist governments and parties throughout the world. Yet while the task is very complex, it can be left undone only at the risk of an exhausting and ultimately fruitless indiscriminate crusade which, by dint of its lack of discrimination, is likely to be counterproductive as well; for it tends to restore the very unity of the Communist camp which it is in our interest to prevent.

A sound anti-Communist policy would ask itself at every turn what the relations of this particular Communist government or movement are likely to be with the Soviet Union and China, and how those relations are likely to be influenced by our choice of policy. It would choose a different approach to Cuba, which is a military and political outpost of the Soviet Union in the Western Hemisphere, from that to North Vietnam, which maintains an uneasy balance in its dependence upon the Soviet Union and China, and would prefer not to be subservient to either. Such a policy no doubt entails considerable risks; for the analysis may be mistaken or the policy may fail through miscalculation. Furthermore and most importantly, such a policy is faced with a real dilemma. That dilemma is presented by the prospect of the rise of revolutionary movements in Asia, Africa, and Latin America, most, if not all, of which are likely to have a Communist component. In other words, any of these revolutionary movements risks being taken over by Communism.

#### *An Alternative to Crusades*

In the face of this risk, we think we can choose between two different courses of action. On the one hand, we can oppose all revolutionary movements around the world. But in consequence of such opposition and in spite of our reformist intentions, we shall then transform ourselves into the anti-revolutionary power *per se* after the model of Metternich's Austria of 150 years ago, and we will find ourselves defending a *status quo* which we know to be unjust and in the long run indefensible. For we know of course that the rational choice open to us is not between the *status quo* and revolution, but between non-Communist and different types of Communist revolutions. But it is our fear of Communism that forces us into an anti-revolutionary stance *per se*.

On the other hand, if we refrain from intervening against those revolutionary movements, we risk their being taken over by their Communist component. It would then be left to our skill in political manipulation to prevent this Communist take-over from coming about, or if it should come about, to prevent such a Communist revolution from becoming subservient to the Soviet Union or China. The United States would

then have to compete with the Soviet Union and China in the sponsorship of revolutions, taking the risk that not all those revolutions would remain under American sponsorship.

Such a policy would make the highest demands on the technical skill, the moral stamina, and the political wisdom of our government, but it is the only one that promises at least a measure of success. The alternative, the anti-Communist crusade, is in comparison simplicity itself. The domestic "consensus" supports it, and it makes but minimum demands on moral discrimination, intellectual subtlety, and political skill. Its implementation is in essence a problem of military logistics: how to get the requisite number of armed men quickly to the theater of revolution. That task is easy, and we have shown ourselves adept at it. Yet the achievement of that task does not solve the problem of revolution. It smothers, as it were, the fire of revolution under a military blanket; but it does not extinguish it. And when that fire breaks out again with increased fury, the assumptions of our policy have left us with no remedy but the commitment of more armed men trying to smother it again.

This policy is bound to be ineffective in the long run against the local revolution to which it is applied. It is also ineffective in its own terms of the anti-Communist crusade. For the very logic which makes us appear as the anti-revolutionary power *per se* surrenders to Communism the sponsorship of revolution everywhere. Thus the anti-Communist crusade achieves what it aims to prevent: the exploitation of the revolutions of the age by the Soviet Union and China.

Finally, our reliance upon a simple anti-Communist stance and its corollary, military intervention, is bound to corrupt our judgment about the nature and the limits of our power. We flatter ourselves to defend right against wrong, to discharge the self-imposed duty to establish a new order throughout the world, and to do so effectively within the limits of military logistics. Thus we may well come to think that all the problems of the political world will yield to moral conviction and military efficiency, and that whatever we want to do we shall be able to do so because we possess those two assets in abundance. "Among precautions against ambition," Edmund Burke warned his countrymen in 1793 under similar conditions, "it may not be amiss to take one precaution against our *own*. I must fairly say, I dread our *own* power and our *own* ambition; I dread our being too much dreaded. . . . We may say that we shall not abuse this astonishing and hitherto unheard-of power. But every other nation will think we shall abuse it. It is impossible but that, sooner or later, this state of things must produce a combination against us which may end in our ruin." Pitt and Castlereagh heeded that warning. Our future and the future of the world will depend on our heeding it as well.